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AN EXPLANATION
OF THE SCHEME
OF
THE LONDON LIBRARY,
IN A LETTER TO
THE EARL OF CLARENDON.

BY
W. D. CHRISTIE, Esq.,
OF THE INNER TEMPLE, BARRISTER AT LAW.

The greatest city in the world is destitute of that useful institution, a public library; and the writer who has undertaken to treat on any large historical subject is reduced to the necessity of purchasing for his private use a numerous and valuable collection of the books which must form the basis of his work.
Gibbon's Vindication. Miscell. Works, vol. iv. p. 591. (London, 1814.)

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HENRY HOOPER, 31, PALL MALL EAST.

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PREFACE.

The writer's connexion with the Committee of the proposed London Library renders it necessary for him to declare that he alone is responsible for all particular statements and opinions contained in the following pamphlet. The responsibility of the Committee extends no further than to a concurrence in the writer's estimate of the importance of the object, and a general confidence in the mode he would adopt of illustrating and enforcing its importance.

It is more particularly necessary to define the responsibility of the Committee in respect of statements and opinions concerning the arrangements by which the London Library is to be established and conducted. Very few of these arrangements have yet been definitively settled. The Committee, until very lately, have been engaged only in a tentative process,—making an experiment on the possibility of establishing a large lending Library in London on terms which should place it within the reach of all who have intellectual wants to satisfy, and not legislating for such an Institution as established. It would have been premature to make many arrangements of detail, before they were assured of the success of their experiment; for many, and some of the most important, of these arrangements, the rules, for instance, as to the lending of books, would depend very greatly on the degree to which the experiment had been successful, or, in other words, on the number of sub-

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scribers obtained for the purpose of a commencement. The Committee are now about to make a commencement with five hundred subscribers. Now, therefore, they are engaged in framing rules and making all other necessary arrangements. But the deliberation obviously required may yet delay for some little time their final adjustment and publication ; and, in the meanwhile, it has been thought expedient that the following pamphlet should be issued. I have thought it necessary to sketch, in the pamphlet, a scheme of the proposed Library, in order to help the explanation both of its usefulness and its feasibility. After what I have already said, I need hardly add that this scheme must not be understood as *the* scheme of the London Library.

After all, there can be no very great diversity of rules for the London Library. But it is right to apprise the reader that the particular scheme of rules sketched in the following pamphlet has been introduced only for the purpose of illustration, and that, if the circumstance of its having been introduced even for this purpose shows that it is approved of by the writer, there is nothing whatever to show that it is approved of by any one else.

The writer conceives that the composition of the Committee must afford a better guarantee to the public than any other which can be looked for, of the goodness of any scheme of rules which they may ultimately determine upon. As the London Library is to be opened, and books are to be issued, on the 1st of May, there can be now but very little time to wait before the Committee complete and publish their arrangements.

Temple, Feb. 15th, 1841.

AN EXPLANATION,

ETC.

MY LORD,

As, among the many persons who are more fit, none has been found willing to undertake the task, it has descended to me to endeavour to explain, in a pamphlet, the inadequacy of the Libraries, existing at present in London, to the intellectual wants of the metropolis and the kingdom, the nature of the Library that is wanted, the means by which such a Library may be established, and the good which will flow from its establishment. Such a pamphlet will be a pleading to the public in behalf of a scheme which has been honoured, from a very early period of its agitation, by your Lordship's approval and assistance. In addressing the pamphlet to you, I am carrying out the views which have already led the Committee of the proposed London Library prominently to associate with your name the infant Institution. I hope I may be permitted to say that the object which the Committee desire to attain, and in behalf of which this pamphlet is written, is one fitted to repay the honour which it receives in the sanction of your Lordship's name, and that, if success shall ultimately crown our efforts, the great public benefits involved in this success will justify and reward your co-operation.

The object in question is the establishment in London of a large, general, comprehensive Library, from which books may be taken out to be read at home, and which shall be generally accessible. Public Libraries, from which books may be taken out, exist in almost all the capitals and larger

towns of continental Europe. The Bibliothèque Royale in Paris, the Royal Libraries in Berlin, Munich, Dresden and Stuttgart, and their liberal regulations for the lending out of books to strangers and foreigners as well as inhabitants, are known to all who have visited these capitals.* Throughout the German states, with the exception of Austria, in every town where a University is established, the Library attached to the University is accessible to the inhabitants, through the professors, for the taking out of books: and in the few remaining cases of large towns in Germany, where there is no University, the wise munificence of the several

* The books in the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris are lent to all persons who, in the words of the regulation, "are known to be solvent and to be engaged in useful pursuits," and who are approved of by the conservators of the Library. Foreigners are permitted to borrow books on bringing a guarantee from their ambassador, minister, or consul, or a recommendation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Books are lent out for a period not longer than a month at a time; but at the end of the month, the permission to keep a book is renewable, if it has not been applied for by any one else. On the other hand, the conservators have the power of recalling the book any time they think fit. The number of volumes in the Bibliothèque Royale is estimated at 700,000.

Books are also lent out from the Bibliothèque de St Geneviève, which contains 160,000 volumes, and, to a limited extent, from the Bibliothèque Mazarine, containing 90,000.

In Berlin, books are taken out from the Royal Library, as a matter of right, by members of certain privileged classes, and by other persons on giving a guarantee to the Secretary of the Library. A foreigner's guarantee is usually procured from his minister or banker. The books are allowed to be kept by privileged persons a month, by others a fortnight; but in both cases the permission is renewable. The number of volumes in this Library is estimated at 320,000.

In Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart, the regulations of the Royal Libraries are essentially similar to those of the Berlin Library. The Library at Munich contains 800,000 volumes (including duplicates), that at Dresden 300,000, and that at Stuttgart 197,000. In Munich, besides the Royal Library, the largest in the world, there is the University Library for the use of professors and students, and from which, through professors, books can be taken out by inhabitants generally, which contains upwards of 200,000 volumes.

The number of volumes contained in these Libraries has been specified, as being one important element of their usefulness, and one most necessary to be considered in comparing them with other Libraries. The Library of the British Museum, the largest Library in London, the only one which can be called a national Library, contains 240,000 volumes; and from the Library of the British Museum books are not allowed to be taken out.

governments has always provided a lending Library. Thus Frankfort, Hanover, and Dusseldorf possess public Libraries which, though they cannot compete in size with those of Dresden and Stuttgart, or of the University towns of Göttingen, Heidelberg and Leipsic, lend out books as these do. In Holland, books are lent out on the most liberal terms from the Libraries at Amsterdam, Leyden, and the Hague. In Sweden, there is first of all the Royal Library in Stockholm, containing 70,000 volumes, from which books are allowed to be taken out on terms rendering it generally available; and there are eleven provincial lending Libraries besides, two of them attached to the Universities of Upsala and Lund. Copenhagen contains three public Libraries from which books may be taken out, namely, the King's Library containing 400,000 volumes, the University Library containing 100,000 volumes, and Classen's Library containing 35,000 volumes: and there is also a public lending Library of considerable size in each of the seven dioceses of Denmark. There is a public Library, from which books may be taken out, in Iceland. Yet the British capital possesses no large public Library of this sort.*

Nor is it only with the capitals and cities of foreign countries that London can be thus unfavourably compared. In Edinburgh there is the Advocates' Library, containing 130,000 volumes, from which books are allowed to be taken out, and which is made available to all literary men, and, through the liberal nature of its regulations, to persons in all parts of Scotland: and besides this Library, which has enjoyed, since 1710, the privilege of receiving a gratuitous copy of every published book, there are the Uni-

* The above information on the subject of foreign Libraries has been chiefly derived from the communications received from her Majesty's ministers abroad, in reply to a circular despatch by Lord Palmerston, which enclosed a list of queries on the subject of the Literary Institutions and Libraries of Foreign countries. The list of queries was supplied by Mr. Hawes, M.P. The communications received in reply have all been printed in the Appendices to the two Reports from Select Committees on the British Museum, 1835 and 1836.

versity Library, which has also enjoyed for the same period the Copyright privilege, but now receives an annual parliamentary grant in commutation, and contains about 100,000 volumes; the Signet Library with 40,000 volumes, established and maintained from the unassisted resources of the Society of Writers to the Signet, and two smaller subscription Libraries, from which books may likewise be taken out. In Glasgow there are the University Library and the Glasgow Public Library, considerably smaller of course than the University Library, but yet of more than respectable size and character; and both of these are generally accessible for the taking out of books. Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Halifax, Bristol, Sheffield, Plymouth, Norwich, Newcastle, Bath, Hull, all possess larger or smaller lending Libraries, commensurate with the respective intellectual wants of their inhabitants, and accessible on terms which place them within the reach of the multitude. But in London there is no Library from which books can be taken out, worthy of the metropolis of the United Kingdom, or capable of satisfying the intellectual wants of its inhabitants.

There is, in truth, in London, no national Library whatever, from which books are allowed to be taken out, and which is thus capable of being compared with the great national Libraries of Germany and France, or of reciprocating to the foreigners who visit our metropolis, the literary advantages which Paris, Berlin, and Munich offer to Englishmen. Two lending Libraries indeed there are, which may be called public Libraries, and access to which may also be said to be generally procurable, namely, the Russell Institution, established about thirty years back, on the plan of a joint-stock-company, and the Library in Redcross-street, which is named Dr. Williams's Library from its founder, and for which the public are indebted to the pious munificence of a dissenting divine. But neither of these Libraries contains so large a number of volumes as even the lending Libraries established in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Leeds, can boast of. Neither of them contains more

than 20,000 volumes. In neither of them has even the moderate number of volumes contained been selected in the best manner, for the purpose of a general Library. Such then is the state of London in respect of lending Libraries. The metropolis of a nation boasting herself foremost in all the characteristics of civilization, and glorying in the pre-eminence of her arts and letters,—the city larger than any other city in the world, numbering no less than a million and a half of inhabitants,—the greatest, busiest, and wealthiest emporium of literature, known in the world's history, has no Library from which books may be taken out by the readers and authors who swarm within its far-lying limits, containing more than a miserable modicum of 20,000 volumes. And though sixty years and more have passed since the great historian uttered his complaint and his reproach, the deficiency which he stigmatized still remains a deficiency, and still is “the writer who has undertaken to treat on any large historical subject, reduced to the necessity of purchasing for his private use a numerous and valuable collection of the books which must form the basis of his work.”

We propose then to supply this great deficiency. We propose to establish a Library which, containing books in every department of literature and philosophy, shall allow these books to be taken out and read, where they can be read best, in the study and by the fireside, and which shall offer its advantages to the public on terms rendering it generally accessible. We propose to establish this Library by means of a subscription, so moderate that it can be grudged by none who feel the want of a large general comprehensive lending Library either for themselves or for their families, and yet sufficient to ensure the establishment of the Library on an ample scale, with the support of all by whom the want of it is felt. And taking into consideration the increased and daily increasing facilities of conveyance to all parts of the United Kingdom, we propose to frame regulations which shall make it worth the while of persons in the country and at a distance, no less than of those living in

London and its immediate vicinity, to avail themselves of the Library, thereby increasing at one and the same time its sphere of usefulness, and its means of supplying the wants of its subscribers. Not therefore only for the metropolis itself, but for all parts of the United Kingdom, between which and the metropolis there is easy and regular communication, we propose to establish in London a large, general, comprehensive, cheap, lending Library.

I will first, my Lord, explain, somewhat more in detail, the want of the Library both for residents in the country and for inhabitants of London. I will then give a general description of the means by which it is proposed to establish the Library, and will conclude with an enumeration of the benefits which are likely to flow from its establishment.

I. The want of such a Library for London, and the want of it for the country, had best be considered separately. It is unnecessary to remark that the supply of a want felt by inhabitants of London,—by families, by individuals engaged in business during the day and unable to frequent the British Museum, by authors to whom reading in a public room between fixed hours is irksome, and reading only during the day insufficient, by all who whether for self-cultivation or to increase the public stock of intellectual wealth, require more books than they can afford to purchase, and must now either purchase or go without them, is the primary object of those who have projected the London Library. The extension of the benefits of the Library to residents in the country is subordinate to the attainment of this primary object. This extension has been determined upon, because it had seemed that an additional good might thus be achieved, not only without prejudice to the primary object of the Library, but even with advantage thereto.

The want of the proposed Library in London will be best made manifest by enumerating the libraries which now exist and describing the amount of aid furnished by each to readers. A general explanation of the grounds of the insufficiency of circulating libraries, which now to some extent, but of necessity very imperfectly, supply the want of a large

public lending Library, will serve to complete the picture of the poor condition of readers in London. A list of the lending Libraries which private enterprise and philanthropy have established in all the large provincial towns of England, shaming the apathy of the metropolis, will give a strong relief to this picture.

The Libraries existing in London, which are now to be enumerated, fall of course under two classes,—Libraries which do not allow books to be taken out, and Libraries which do. The Libraries of the first class do not profess to supply the want, to the supply of which the London Library addresses itself. Those of the second are altogether inadequate to the purpose.

The following is an enumeration of the Libraries of the first class, with a statement of the facilities afforded by each to readers.

1. The Library of the British Museum.—This Library, which, with the exception of gifts, many of them very munificent gifts, by individuals, has been entirely formed through the medium of parliamentary grants and of the privilege, under the Copyright Act, of receiving a copy of every published work, is said to contain between 2 and 300,000 volumes.* The British Museum was instituted in 1754, by act of Parliament, the act authorising the raising of the sum of £100,000, by way of lottery, for the purpose. Of this sum £30,000 was set apart by the first trustees for the payment of future annual expenses, the remainder having been expended in the purchase of Sir Hans Sloane's Library and collections, of the Harleian Manuscripts, and of the splendid mansion which, since very greatly enlarged, is still the British Museum. In 1757, George II. transferred to

* Mr. Panizzi, in his evidence before the Committee of 1836, stated that the number of volumes in the Library of the British Museum was 240,000, and the number of manuscripts 23,500. (Report, p. 388.)

The brief general account, given above, of the Library of the British Museum, has been principally taken from the article *British Museum* in the Penny Cyclopædia, understood to have been contributed by Sir Henry Ellis.

the Library of the British Museum the privilege, secured to the King's Library by the act of 8. Anne, of receiving a gratuitous copy of every published work. For nearly a century, therefore, have English authors been contributing, under compulsion, out of their own scanty gains, to the aggrandisement of this national collection. Large annual parliamentary grants have formed the principal part of the income of the British Museum, from its establishment to the present time. This grant has latterly ranged from £16,000 to £17,000. In the last year it amounted to £29,953, but was thus swelled by the large expenses of new buildings. The regulations for the admission of the public to the Library, which has been thus established and maintained by grants of public money and by the compulsory gifts of authors, are as follows. Books may be read in the reading room attached to the Library every day, except on Sundays and a few regular holidays during the year, between the hours of ten and five by all persons who can provide themselves with a recommendation for admission satisfactory to the trustees. The recommendation required is one which can be procured, without difficulty, by every person who ought to be admitted; and so far there is no improper restriction of the use of this national Library. There are many reasons also, doubtless to be urged, for allowing books only to be read in the reading-room and during the day, as for instance the chances of theft, loss and mutilation incurred by letting books be taken out, and of fire by opening the Library at night, and the necessity of cherishing with all care the one great national collection. But without entering into the consideration of reasons, or presuming to convey censure, I am only concerned to state the fact, that the books contained in the Library of the British Museum can be read only in the Library itself, between the hours of ten and five.

2. Sion College Library.—Sion College was incorporated in 1630, in pursuance of the will of the Rev. Dr. White, Vicar of St. Dunstan's West, as a college for the clergy of London, and a hospital for twenty poor persons.

The Rev. J. Simpson, the then rector of St. Olave's, and one of Dr. White's executors, founded a Library in connexion with the college. The Library was one of those included in the benefits of the Copyright Act, 8 Anne, c. 19. This privilege of receiving a gratuitous copy of every published work was retained by the college till 1836, when in pursuance of the 6 and 7 William IV. c.110, it was commuted for an annual grant. This Library is computed to contain about 50,000 volumes. It is open only during the day, between the hours of ten and four; and books are not allowed to be taken out. It is accessible to the public by an order from one of the fellows. The fellows are all incumbents of livings within the city of London and its liberties.

3. The Library of the Royal Institution. — The Royal Institution, in Albermarle Street, was established in 1800, chiefly for the purpose of improving and diffusing practical science, by lectures, and by the aid of a Laboratory and a Museum. A Library was not the chief, any more than it was the single, end of this Institution. The inadequacy of this Library, therefore, to the wants of the metropolis may be asserted without incurring the suspicion of implying censure on an Institution, which has admirably fulfilled the objects for which it was established, and whose usefulness is known to all who know the names of Davy and Faraday. But though a Library was not the chief or only end of the Royal Institution, it contains a very valuable one, consisting of about 25,000 volumes. Persons are admitted to the Royal Institution, and consequently to the use of its Library, by ballot. Members pay six guineas entrance, and an annual subscription of five guineas, or sixty guineas in commutation of all payments. An annual subscription, however, of five guineas, with an entrance payment of one guinea for the Library, procures admission to the greater part of the privileges of the Royal Institution, in which greater part the use of the Library is included. The Library is open from ten to five every day, and, during the season, also from seven to ten in the evening.

4. The Library of the London Institution.—The London

Institution, in Moorfields, was established in 1805, by means of shares of 75 guineas, for the purpose of furnishing an Institution for the delivery of lectures, a reading-room, and a Library for the citizens of London. The capital required was raised almost in an instant among the merchants and bankers of London: and a charter was obtained in 1807. Great pains were taken, and no expense spared, in the collection of the Library, which had the advantage of being superintended first by the celebrated Porson, and after him by Mr. Upcott, the topographer. The Library now contains about 30,000 volumes. A share in the London Institution was originally 75 guineas, and every shareholder pays an annual subscription of two guineas. The payment of 35 guineas constitutes a life subscriber, who has the same use of the library as a proprietor. The Library is open from ten in the morning to ten at night, every day except Saturday, when it is closed at three.

These are the four principal public Libraries in London, from none of which books are allowed to be taken out. I now proceed to the Libraries of the second class. In this class the only two Libraries at all deserving of mention, are Dr. Williams's Library, in Redcross-street, and the Library of the Russell Institution.

The first of these is a Library founded in pursuance of the will of the Rev. Dr. Daniel Williams, an eminent non-conformist divine, who left his own books, together with Dr. Bates's collection, which with this view he had purchased, for the purpose of a public Library, and directed his trustees to provide a building for their reception. The Library was opened in Redcross-street, Cripplegate, in 1729. It has been increased every year by gifts, and by a small income, allowed from the estates left by Dr. Williams. This income, originally smaller, is now £100 a year; and this is all that can be relied upon for the purchase and the binding of books. The Library now contains upwards of 20,000 volumes. It has rather a special than a general character. It is rich, as may be supposed, in controversial works on divinity,—works which naturally formed the chief part of the foun-

der's own collection, and to which, as naturally, the attention of the trustees has been principally directed. The Library is open every day from ten to four. Any person is admitted to read in it, and also to take out books, on an order from a trustee. The only regulation with regard to the time for which books may be kept out is, that all books must be returned on each of the four quarter days to the trustees from whom the borrowers have respectively received their orders. It is thus seen that the volumes contained in this Library are generally available, in the way of being taken out to be read at home. But the moderate number of volumes which this Library contains, its special character, the scantiness of the means at the disposal of the trustees for keeping it up, no less than its remote and inconvenient situation, prevent the possibility of its being adequate to the wants of the metropolis.

The Russell Institution was established in 1808; and one chief object of its establishment was to provide a lending Library for the metropolis. It was established by shares of 25 guineas, originally 500, and afterwards increased in number to 700. Each shareholder pays an annual subscription of a guinea. Persons are admitted to the use of this Institution, without acquiring any proprietary rights, on the payment of an annual subscription of 3 guineas, or on the payment of 15 guineas at one time, in lieu of all annual subscriptions. The Library forms only a part of this Institution. It has been said that one chief object of this Library was to allow books to be taken out, and the regulations with regard to taking them out are as follows. Every proprietor or subscriber is allowed to have four volumes from the Library at one time; a folio volume is allowed to be kept three weeks, a quarto a fortnight, but all smaller volumes only a week. These regulations as to the time of keeping books are, to say the least, not fitted to carry out the lending principle with the greatest effect. Again, the Library does not contain more than 15,000 volumes; and though these volumes have been chosen in such a manner as to form a better general collection than that in Redcross-

street, yet with so moderate a number of volumes it is impossible that the Library of the Russell Institution can profess anything like completeness, or can supply the want so forcibly described by Gibbon.

These two Libraries, as I have already said, are the only two of those from which books are allowed to be taken out, deserving of mention: and either of these, it will readily be admitted, is very much below both the wants and capabilities of the metropolis. There are several other very much smaller ones, that have been chiefly established within the last few years; and though none of them is at all deserving of mention, individually, yet the number of these smaller lending Libraries that have sprung up in different parts of London within the last few years, seems to illustrate very forcibly the existence of the want which the Committee of the London Library desire to supply. Among them are the City of London Literary and Scientific Institution, in Aldersgate-street; the Metropolitan Literary and Scientific Institution, at Salvador-house in Bishopsgate-street; the Marylebone Literary and Scientific Institution, in Edwards-street, Portman-square; the St. Martin's Subscription Library, the foundation of which was a bequest by Archbishop Tenison, but which has only very lately been made serviceable through the public spirit and activity of some of the parishioners; and the Islington and Southwark Institutions. The largest of these district Libraries may contain perhaps about 7000 volumes, while the number of volumes in some of them is under 2000. But they all lend out their books.

Such then is the condition of London with regard to public Libraries. The largest lending Library in London contains 20,000 volumes. The best general lending Library in London contains 15,000 volumes.

But it may be said, though London is thus ill provided with public lending Libraries, is it not rich in circulating libraries established by acute and enterprising booksellers—and will not the proprietors of these libraries naturally seek to supply existing demands, and more particularly

those demands which cannot be satisfied in the scanty public lending Libraries of the metropolis? That these circulating libraries are generally a very great convenience, I am not required to deny. That many of them are not only very convenient but also of great value, I am most anxious to allow. Many of these circulating libraries are valuable depositories of excellent books, reflecting great credit on the sense and spirit of their proprietors; and, if nothing more were wanted than a library for the general reader to resort to, one might very well be satisfied with some of these. Yet, even for this purpose, the best circulating library must necessarily be inferior to what a public Library in London should be and easily may be. And it may be observed in passing that, as a circulating library is always a commercial speculation, it must always be expected to offer its inferior advantages on less reasonable terms, than those on which a large general public Library, free from all commercial character, may be established.

But that any circulating library, however extensive or well chosen, should be able to supply the place of a public Library, from which writers and inquirers in every department of knowledge may derive all the aid which they can require for the prosecution of their researches, will not be supposed for one moment by any one. And such a library as this does the London Library aspire to be.

The chief object of a circulating library, is the supply of new books in light literature. This may indeed, without injustice, be said to be the chief object even of the best circulating libraries, while of circulating libraries in general it is the only object. The object of the London Library, on the contrary, will be the supply of good books in all departments of knowledge. Books in the lighter departments of literature, and new books, will necessarily be included, else the Library would not be complete: but new books will not be bought, merely because they are new, and much discrimination will necessarily be exercised as to the lighter literature which is the grand stock in trade of circulating Libraries, and subscribers to the London Library will not come

to it, as they go to circulating libraries, for the last review or the reigning romance, led by no other virtue than its novelty. The London Library will therefore not encroach on the proper province of a circulating library, while it must provide a larger and *better* collection of books for the general reader than the best circulating library can by any possibility be, and will be fitted also, it is hoped, to satisfy the wants of those who, the most extensively and with the greatest minuteness of research, cultivate literature and science.

It may be well, before I leave this part of the subject, to contrast the state of London, which has been explained, as regards public lending Libraries, with that of some few of the chief provincial towns in England.

In Manchester, besides the College Library, which forms a part of the old foundation, Chetham's Hospital, and which is a very valuable one, containing 25,000 volumes, but from which books are not allowed to be taken out, there is the Library of the Portico Institution, containing 11,000 volumes and allowing books to be taken out by subscribers. This Institution was established in 1806, by shares of £25, and annual subscriptions, attaching to the shares, of £2 10s. A subscriber is allowed to have two volumes at a time: the time which is allowed for keeping them being left by the rules to the discretion of the Committee.

In Liverpool, there is the Library of the Lyceum in Bold-street, containing about 25,000 volumes, and circulating its books among the subscribers. This Library was established in 1758. The number of shares is limited to 893; the price of a share is £11, and there is besides an annual subscription of a guinea required from every shareholder. Two volumes are allowed to be taken out at one time. The time during which books are allowed to be kept out is left to the discretion of the Committee. The average number of volumes annually circulated is 140,000.*

* The Athenæum Library, which contains 17,000 volumes, does not allow its books to be taken out. It is open however from half past 7 in the morning to 10 at night every day, except on Sundays: and on Sundays from 5 in the afternoon to 10 at night.

In Birmingham, there are two Libraries from which books are allowed to be taken out. 1. The Birmingham Library, containing about 20,000 volumes. There are 560 shareholders, the price of a share being £10, and there being an annual subscription of £1 10s. There is a provision in the rules of this Library to allow strangers the use of the books for a subscription of 7s. 6d. a quarter, and on the condition of their depositing, if they are required to do so, the value of the books which they apply for. 2. The Birmingham New Library, a considerably smaller one than the preceding, with 190 subscribers, who pay two guineas entrance and a pound annually.

In Leeds, there is a very large Library, established in 1768 on the recommendation of Dr. Priestly, and allowing books to be taken out. There are 500 shareholders in this Library, the original value of the shares being twenty guineas (now selling at eleven guineas), and each shareholder paying an annual subscription of £1 5s. Strangers are allowed to use the Library, to the same extent as shareholders, on the payment of 5s. 3d. a quarter. Besides this large Library, there are several smaller ones established on the principle of lending out books.

In Bristol, there is a very excellent Library, from which books are allowed to be taken out. Three books are allowed at a time. The price of a share is ten guineas, and there is an annual subscription of a guinea.

These particulars will prove what has already been asserted in general terms, that the condition of London in respect of public lending Libraries is, taking all circumstances into consideration, greatly inferior to that of many provincial towns in England. But it is needless to pursue this subject further. I hope I may now consider as established the want of a public lending Library for residents in London. As to residents in the country to whom the use of the Library is to be extended, it need only be said that they generally have no other resources than their own and circulating libraries, and that to them, therefore, the want of a Library such as that which is proposed is even greater than to

residents in London, who, if they cannot take books from the British Museum to their homes, can go to the British Museum to read or to make references.

II. I will now briefly and generally explain the means by which it is proposed to establish this Library.

It is to be established by the subscriptions of those, who in London and throughout the kingdom, recognise the want of the Library, and desire its establishment either for themselves or for the benefit of others. If they who have projected this Library are justified in the views which have instigated them to the project, the number of persons, in London alone, who *want* the Library must be sufficient, with a very moderate subscription from each, to ensure its establishment on an ample scale. When to these are added the residents in all other parts of the kingdom who will be able to make use of the Library, and those, who fortunately not feeling the want themselves, will generously assist in the realization of a great public benefit, the number who may be expected to co-operate becomes very large indeed. The terms of subscription have therefore been made very moderate, both that the Library may be made accessible and useful to a very much larger number, and because larger means may be expected to arise from a low subscription suited to the many than from a higher one which comparatively only few might be able to afford. These terms are now £6 entrance (raised from £5 after the number of subscribers reached five hundred) and £2 a year. The five hundred subscribers already obtained are to be viewed of course only as a beginning. This is the number for which the Committee have from the first thought it prudent to wait before proceeding to any arrangements of detail, but with which they have also from the first thought that they would be justified in making a commencement. The commencement is now to be made immediately. The commencement once made, the number of subscribers may be expected to increase rapidly : and it will be strange indeed, if, with a subscription so small and with a promise of usefulness so great, with so large a number of persons in

London who *want* the Library, and so large a number who are always ready to assist in any scheme of public usefulness, the London Library does not soon congregate around itself thousands of subscribers.

With five thousand subscribers, a number one would think very easily to be procured in London alone, there would be a sum of £30,000 derived from entrance-payments, and an annual income of £10,000, at the service of the Library. Such means, judiciously expended, would in a very short time provide a collection of books worthy of the metropolis of Great Britain, and a building worthy of the books. With such means, the Library might very speedily be established on the amplest scale. Such means would enable the London Library very early to raise its head among the Libraries of Europe, and to redeem London from its present deficiency and disgrace.

But there may yet be some time to wait before such a number of subscribers, even as five thousand, is procured. A much smaller number, however, will enable the Committee to make a very good beginning, and to establish a Library much more generally useful than any Library at present existing in London,—more useful than the Library of the Russell Institution and the Redcross-street Library, as being larger and better chosen, more useful than the Library of the British Museum on account of the books being allowed to be taken out. And the Committee will naturally wait until the number of volumes is sufficiently large to require an edifice such as, it is confidently hoped, will in no distant day bear the name of the London Library, before they erect a building of their own, even though the number of subscribers should early justify the step.

All subscribers to the Library will have equal privileges. All will be admitted alike to read in the Library, and all will on like terms take out books. All will have an equal voice in the affairs of the Library, though chiefly, of course, through the medium of a committee to be elected at annual general meetings of the subscribers.

As the London Library proposes to make itself useful

chiefly by allowing books to be taken out to be read at home, the time during which it will be open for the purpose of allowing subscribers to read in the Library need not certainly be longer than the usual time, if indeed so long. But it is of course important that subscribers should be able to read in the Library, as well as take out books : and it has accordingly been stated, from the very first, and in all the prospectuses which have been issued, that "a central situation in London will be chosen for the Library, for the special convenience of residents in London, who may wish to read in the Library, as well as to avail themselves of the privilege of taking books to their homes."

It will be expected that I should here give some account of the mode in which the circulation of books among subscribers will be conducted. Of this I am at present unable to speak in any other than the most general manner. But the principle of lending being the distinguishing principle of the London Library, it will not be suspected that the importance of carrying out this principle by means of proper rules will be undervalued.

There seem to be two modes of doing this. One of them is the mode adopted in the Cambridge Library and in the Edinburgh Advocates' Library, of requiring all books to be returned to the Library on certain stated days in the year, and thus allowing them to be kept, if they are wanted so long, for the whole interval between any two such days ; the other is to have a fixed time during which books shall be allowed to be kept out, which is counted from the day of their being taken out. The first mode appears to the writer to possess many advantages over the second. It is simpler, more easily carried on in practice, inasmuch as it is easier for those who borrow books to remember a few obvious days on which all books are required to be returned, than to retain in the memory every different day on which every different book was borrowed, and to proceed with every separate calculation, less troublesome, therefore, for the officers of the Library who will have fewer omissions to note and fewer penalties to impose, and possessing, last not least,

the advantage of affording periodical opportunities of inspecting the whole Library. In the Cambridge University Library all books must be returned on each of the four quarter-days: in the Advocates' Library, twice a year, on the 1st of January and the 1st of July. The obvious objection that some one else may want a book which has been taken out, and may be obliged to wait from early in January to the 1st of July, is removed, in the Advocates' Library, by a provision that when a book has been borrowed for more than two months, it shall be recalled if any one else applies for it. Another equally obvious objection that a person who takes a book out towards the end of December or the end of June, needing it at that precise time, will be able to have little or no use of it before the day of recall, is removed, in the instance of the same Library, by another provision that the half-yearly calls shall apply only to books which have been borrowed two months or longer before they are made. This mode of conducting the circulation of the book is found to work well in the Cambridge University Library. The other mode is adopted in most of the German Libraries, for which, as the range of circulation is not large, it is sufficiently convenient. Should it be thought fit to adopt this second mode in the London Library, it will be necessary, on account of the great distances to which books are to be taken, to fix a long time, at least so far as concerns subscribers at a distance.

The expenses attendant on the carriage of books to and from the Library will be defrayed necessarily by the subscribers: and by them also will be borne all the risk of the loss or injury of books in their transmission. Subscribers in the country will themselves know best the cheapest and safest mode of transmission to their respective places of abode. Country subscribers will require to furnish themselves with boxes for the carriage to and from of the books which they apply for: and it will be desirable that these boxes should be of uniform construction.

An objection is frequently made to the scheme of this Library that it will require so very large a number of du-

plicates. This is a matter which necessarily has not been overlooked by the projectors of the London Library. But at the same time it is not to be expected that this or any other lending Library can ever possess a sufficient number of duplicates of a sufficient number of books, to be able to satisfy at once every want of every subscriber. A person paying £6 entrance and £2 a year to the London Library, must expect to receive many benefits, and meet with some disappointments. Even in a Library from which books are not allowed to be taken out, readers are sometimes doomed to be disappointed, and to find a book, which they have come from a distance to read, in the unyielding hands of another.

But the chief objection is founded on the great loss and injury of books, which, it is alleged, will follow from their being lent out, more particularly in the case of the London Library, from which books are to be circulated through all parts of the United Kingdom. The general answer to this objection is that there will be rules making the subscribers liable for the value of books lost or injured, and penalties to enforce a compliance with these rules, that the experience of existing large lending Libraries, in which proper rules are properly enforced, proves the necessary risk of loss and injury of books to be very small indeed, and that even if it were greater than it is, or as great as those who urge the objection represent it to be, this would only be a disadvantage attaching to the scheme of a lending Library, which could avail little against its great and manifold advantages.

The nature of the rules, and of the penalties to give effect to the rules, need hardly be explained at all, and can at any rate be explained very briefly. A subscriber who loses or mutilates a book will be required, by the rules of the Library, to replace it. If he refuses to do this, he can be excluded from the society, thus losing for ever after the privileges of the Library, and the entrance payment by which he purchased them. The Committee may also have power to impose fines at their discretion for slight defacements of

books, the non-payment of the fines again entailing expulsion from the Society in the last resort. Rules such as these are calculated very effectually to ensure the Library from suffering through the loss or injury of books by subscribers.

There are many persons, however, who are more likely to be convinced by the results of experience, than by speculations, however simple, on the effect of rules even so obvious as those which have now been sketched.

The Library of the University of Göttingen, which contains upwards of 300,000 volumes, and from which books are lent out to professors, students and others on the most liberal terms, supplies very satisfactory experience. It is stated, in a very full and excellent account of this Library in an article in the *Quarterly Journal of Education*, that it is made use of, in the way of taking out books, by about two thousand persons. I extract from the article the following pertinent passage. "When a book is returned, it is carefully examined, and if any injury has been done, it must be made good by the borrower or his surety. With respect to loss of books or damage sustained by wilful or wanton mischief, Professor Benecke, who has been a librarian at Göttingen for more than twenty years, assures us that mistrust and reserve in lending the books have tended much more to produce mischief than liberality and confidence."*

The following is the experience of the Berlin Library, given by Mr. Panizzi in a paper on Foreign Libraries printed in the Appendix to the Report of the Select Committee on the British Museum, 1836. "Few books have ever been lost by lending; and if a book be found spoiled or damaged, he who borrowed it last is answerable for it; being especially warned of his liability, if he does not, before taking the book away, examine it carefully and point out any defect he may thus discover in the volume. About 5000 volumes are lent out yearly."†

The Library of the University of Cambridge is conducted

* *Quarterly Journal of Education*, vol. ii. p. 222.

† Appendix to Report on British Museum, 1836, p. 557.

on the principle of allowing its books to be taken out by all Masters of Arts of the University, a very numerous body. Other persons borrow them through the intervention of Masters of Arts. Ten books may be had by any Master of Arts at one time. The only rule with regard to the return of books is that all books must be in the Library on each of the four quarter days. Books therefore may be kept as long as from one quarter day to the next; and it follows that they are taken away from Cambridge and to a distance. Fines are imposed if books are not returned at the proper time, and these fines are gradually increased until they are returned. If a book is lost or seriously mutilated, the Master of Arts in whose name it was taken out is liable for its value. I state what is known to every member of the University, when I state that no difficulty is experienced in the enforcement of these rules, and that the Library is not found to suffer from the loss or injury of its books, which, it will be admitted by all, are lent out on very liberal terms.

In the Signet Library in Edinburgh, which contains 40,000 volumes, I am informed that during the twelve months ending on the 17th of May, 1840, 2930 books were taken out by 547 persons. My informant, one of the assistant Librarians, adds that no books at all are lost.

In the King's College Library at Aberdeen books are liberally lent out to the professors, students and others. In a Report of the Scotch University Commissioners, the following statement is made on the subject of the loss of books: "There do not appear to have been any abuses during the above mentioned period (from 1829 to 1836), in regard to the borrowing or retaining of books; and with the exception of a few volumes, which were lost in consequence of the absconding of a Librarian in the year 1830, no books have been lost, for which full pecuniary compensation has not been made."*

A similarly satisfactory statement is made in the same Re-

* *Second Report of the University Commissioners, Scotland, p. xxvii.*

port with regard to the Library of Marischal College. "The only book lost or missing since 1826, is a Hebrew Psalter in English letters, which has been lost by the borrower, who will either recover and return it or pay for it."*

But even if some few books were lost or injured, and the loss or injury not made good to the Library, is not this an evil that would be amply compensated by a very small portion of the advantages likely to flow from the system of allowing books to be taken out? Is it not an evil which might, at once and without hankering, be put down as a part of the price to be paid for the benefits of a lending Library. Such, it appears, is the opinion of the king of Denmark. It is stated in the paper, from which I have already quoted, by Mr. Panizzi, that inconveniences are felt to arise from the mode in which books are lent out from the King's Library. "Books are sometimes kept for years, are lost, &c. ; *but the King prefers to submit to these evils, rather than diminish the use of his collection.*"† So in a statement with regard to the Public Library at Geneva, which contains about 32,000 volumes, and from which books are allowed to be taken out, it is observed in the same paper,—“About 8000 or 9000 volumes yearly are thus lent, and it is owing to it that books are lost and damaged: *yet these disorders are fully compensated by the usefulness of the circulation.*”‡

III. It now remains to attempt an enumeration of the benefits which the establishment of the proposed Library is likely to confer. The most of what is to be said under this head must have been already more or less indicated: and the benefits to be derived from a large, general, comprehensive lending Library cannot require any long, while they certainly do not admit of any varied, description. It may not be altogether profitless, however, to make some distribution into general classes of the persons who will benefit by the Library, and to explain, with a little more particularity than has been yet done, the modes in which these different classes of persons will be benefited.

* Second Report. Appendix, p. 203.

† Appendix to Report on British Museum, 1836, p. 557.

‡ *Ibid.*

I will speak, first, of the advantages to be derived from such a Library, by families, whether residing in London or in the country. Any one member, subscribing to the London Library, will be able to procure for a whole family a constant supply of good books, books of instruction or of amusement for joint family reading, or books to assist some one member of the family in the prosecution of a particular study, on terms which are actually lower than those of the most meagre novel-mongering collections, and compared with which the terms of even the largest and best-chosen of circulating libraries are extravagantly high.* They will on such terms get a number of books, say a dozen, which may be kept for a length of time, from a large and comprehensive Library, which contains not only books to beguile time, but books for self-cultivation, and not only the ordinary standard books of general instruction, but books to supply the necessities of the student and the wants of the learned inquirer. It will be an additional advantage of the London Library, that subscribers may resort to it, if they choose, to read books there, as well as read them at home. Where a person wants only to make references, this will be always a

* The terms of Mr. Cawthorne's excellent Library in Cockspur-street are, for country subscribers, ten guineas a year with the privilege of receiving twenty-four volumes at a time, eight guineas with twenty volumes, and six guineas with sixteen volumes. Messrs. Saunders and Ottley's terms are eight and six guineas a year; for the first subscription twelve volumes may be had at one time in town, and twenty-four in the country, and for the second ten in town and twenty in the country. A subscription of twelve guineas to this circulating library enables the subscriber to have a supply "consisting entirely of the new and popular publications, with the privilege of directing the purchase of any work not previously added to the Library." Mr. Bull's terms are for a family six guineas a year, for which twelve volumes may be had at a time in town, and twenty-four in the country. In this circulating library, "the new publications so abundantly supplied for perusal are in the course of the year shared *gratis* among the subscribers, so that every year a subscriber can have two guineas' worth of any of the new works to keep."

These, it is known to every one, are among the best circulating libraries, and contain good collections of standard books as well as of new and light works. But the terms of the smallest and wretchedest circulating library are four guineas a year. Those of the London Library, a large comprehensive general collection of standard works, are to be £6 entrance, and £2 a year.

very great convenience, especially if he is a subscriber resident in London. Subscribers resident in the country, on the other hand, will find a reading-room attached to a large Library of very great use to them, in occasional visits to the metropolis. And though access to the reading-room will be a privilege not transferable, and therefore without direct benefit to other members of the subscriber's family like his privilege of taking out books to be read at home, an arrangement might be made, and probably will be made, as it will afford another means of income to the Library, to allow any member of a subscriber's family access to the reading-room on the payment of a smaller subscription. This, however, by the bye. Without this, families will be able to derive very much greater advantages, on more reasonable terms, from the London Library, than they can do from any of the circulating libraries to which, in the absence of any large general comprehensive lending Library, and unable to buy all the books which they require, they are now compelled to resort.

A large Library, from which books are allowed to be taken out, will necessarily be a great boon to all professional men, and men of business, whose occupations prevent their going during the day to the British Museum or any similar Institution, and who can now only look to circulating libraries to supply the deficiencies of their own private collections. This is a point which requires no long explanation. But if the London Library will be thus obviously useful, generally, to men of business and professions, it will be especially so to the younger members of this class, who are less likely to be provided with sufficiently large libraries of their own, and to whom, whether for systematic study, or for amusement, a good supply of books at home is more of an object.

The advantage of the London Library to authors merits a somewhat longer exposition. A large comprehensive Library, fitted by the variety of its biblical riches to supply the wants of inquirers in every department of knowledge, and liberally circulating its treasures to the extremities of the United Kingdom, will be an invaluable aid to all

where books must be read in the Library itself, are necessarily greater than for men.

I have thus, my Lord, endeavoured to explain the mode and degree of usefulness of the proposed London Library to certain general classes of persons, which, it has always seemed to the originators of this project, must supply many and eager subscribers. I have considered this the best mode of explaining the usefulness of the Library, and the one the most likely to procure the co-operation necessary for our success. It only remains to observe of one of the classes of which I have spoken, that the interests of authors are public rather than private interests, and to appeal likewise to the public, humbly as befits me, and briefly as will suffice, in behalf of an Institution which, in promoting the interests of authors, will necessarily promote the interests of literature and learning, and in promoting these interests, as necessarily promote the greatest and best interests of mankind.

Yes, my Lord, it is a great and a good work which I now humbly call on the British public to second and fulfil. Let it be no longer said that the capital city of our nation,—the largest and wealthiest of capital cities,—the capital city of a nation pre-eminent in literary enterprise and literary fame and munificence of literary patronage, owes neither to the enlightenment of her rulers nor the beneficence and co-operative spirit of her citizens, a Lending Library, worthy of the city and of the nation, to aid and bless learners and teachers alike, strengthening with strong food or soothing with soft medicine the souls of the many, guiding and lightening the labours of those who build up the nation's wisdom and the nation's fame. May this our endeavour find public sympathy and support, and may it be given to us to see the plant which we have planted and whose young growth we have watched and watered, become, by the nation's care, a mighty tree, flourishing and bringing forth fruit, growing ever and strengthening, scattering bounties innumerable, standing through future ages, green and strong, a blessing and a glory to the land!

I have the honour to be,

&c. &c. &c.

